



USDA Rural Development

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News Release

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Trump Administration Invests \$72 Million in Distance Learning and Telemedicine Infrastructure in 40 States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands

Distance Learning and Telemedicine Investments will Benefit Rural Residents in New Hampshire, Vermont

WASHINGTON, Oct. 7, 2020 – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced the [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#) is investing \$72 million in grants to help rural residents gain access to health care and educational opportunities. These investments will benefit more than 12 million rural residents nationally, and include \$465,697 in grant funding to the Northern Vermont University Distance Learning Initiative, and \$181,400 to the University of New Hampshire. In addition, Memorial Hospital in Carrol Country, New Hampshire, will benefit from part of the \$999,573 grant awarded to MaineHealth.

“In today’s environment, e-connectivity is no longer a want—it is a necessity,” said USDA Rural Development State Director Anthony Linardos. “Providing access to telemedicine and distance learning is an essential part of strengthening rural communities, especially during the coronavirus pandemic. These investments in NVU, UNH and Memorial Hospital will increase and improve educational opportunities and healthcare for rural residents throughout Vermont and New Hampshire. Under the leadership of President Trump, USDA is committed to being a strong partner to rural communities because when rural America thrives, all of America thrives.”

Background:

USDA is funding 116 projects through the [Distance Learning and Telemedicine](#) (DLT) grant program. The program helps health care and education institutions buy the equipment and software necessary to deploy distance-learning and telemedicine services to rural residents.

Perdue announced investments today in Alaska, Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, New Hampshire, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Vermont, Washington,

Wisconsin, West Virginia, Wyoming, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Examples of projects announced today include:

- The Northern Vermont University (NVU) Distance Learning Initiative will use \$465,697 in grant funding to build its partnership with dozens of participating sites in Vermont. They include the Howard Center, Rutland Mental Health Services and Washington County Mental Health Services, among others. The partnership's mission is to expand distance learning and telemedicine services throughout the state. The partnership provides leadership, technical expertise and content delivery to its members, and supplies a wealth of online training and preventative resources aimed at treating substance-use disorder, mental-health conditions, and other intellectual and developmental disorders. User sites across the state in nine counties will receive equipment to expand their telepresence to offer these resources.
- The University of New Hampshire will establish and develop a telehealth network between the school and the state's prison system. The network is designed to offer programs and services that help inmates improve their rehabilitation and recovery by addressing substance-use disorder issues. Providing virtual parenting support to incarcerated individuals is also a stated goal of the UNH telehealth network.
- MaineHealth will use its funding to establish telehealth carts that provide "eConsults" to clinicians for patients across MaineHealth's rural hospitals and practices—including Memorial Hospital in Carroll County—especially as they respond to COVID-19. Rural clinicians will use these carts while connecting with tertiary care specialists via videoconferencing. This project will drastically reduce the rural patient's wait for an appointment and the clinician's travel time.

To learn more about investment resources for rural areas, interested parties should contact their [USDA Rural Development state office](#). USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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